



Testimony of Howard Rifkin, Partnership for Strong Communities on H.B. 5016, *An Act Implementing the Governor's Recommendations Concerning General Government*
Appropriations Committee, March 8, 2012

My name is Howard Rifkin. I am the Executive Director of the Partnership for Strong Communities, a statewide housing advocacy organization dedicated to finding solutions to end and prevent homelessness, expand affordable housing and create strong, vibrant communities.

I am testifying in support of the Governor's proposal to consolidate state housing functions in DECD as part of H.B. 5016. I previously testified before you in support of this proposal at the DECD Appropriations Hearing earlier this Session. I again testify on behalf of the Partnership and from the perspective of having worked on housing issues in this state for over 30 years and as a representative of State Treasurer Denise Nappier on CHFA for twelve years.

While it is clear that there are concerns about elements of this proposal in the General Assembly – which I have listened to carefully and have had many conversations about with advocates and others - I am still convinced that this proposal of the Governor is a tremendous opportunity to ensure that housing support, redevelopment and development is done in a coordinated and more effective way. On January 30th the Partnership along with a broad-based coalition re-launched our Reaching Home Campaign to End Homelessness, modeled after the Federal Plan called "Opening Doors". Our intention is to end chronic homelessness and homelessness among veterans within 5 years and among families with children within 10 years. This work is at the heart of the very existence of the Partnership for Strong Communities, and I believe that this reorganization can and will contribute to our ability to achieve those goals.

Another of the Partnership's campaigns is called Home Connecticut – an effort to promote through incentives to municipalities the creation of mixed income housing in town centers and along transit lines. Connecticut with its ambitious and far-reaching plan to expand mass transportation has a one-time opportunity to get this right. We cannot waste this chance to support the kind of development we need – including affordable housing as we re-build our rail and bus systems. While not a complete answer to this challenge, I believe that the creation of an Office of Housing coupled with the Governor's major commitments of capital will and can contribute to the right kind of development along these transit lines.

In my view the advancement of supportive housing opportunities for the homeless, addressing the broad need for more affordable housing, preservation of existing units of affordable housing, and development of housing in town centers and around train and bus stations will be much advanced by this proposal.

I urge your support of this reorganization.